

SOFTWARE HELP

I can't pick the best exposure

Q My digital camera has an auto-bracket function, which I find particularly handy when taking photos of scenes in strong sunlight with heavy shadows. However, it's not always easy to choose the best exposure afterwards. I'd like to combine the bright areas of one photo with the dark areas of another. Is there any way to do this using Photoshop Elements?

Robert Padwick

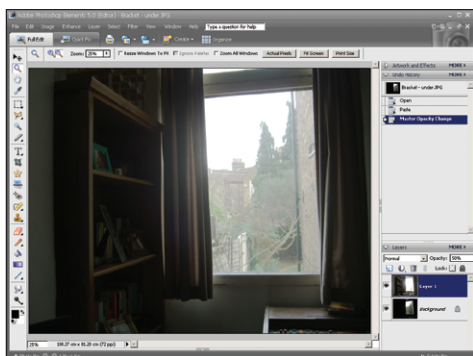
A Exposure bracketing is the process of taking brighter and darker photos of the same scene, enabling you to choose the best one after the event. Typically, you take three pictures, one using the camera's automatic settings and two more using the exposure value (EV) compensation control to slightly over- and underexpose the image. Some cameras have an auto-bracket function that automates the process, taking three pictures in quick succession. Choosing your favourite is usually easy, but high-contrast scenes such as photos with a very bright or dark background can be less clear-cut. Dark areas will look better in the overexposed image while bright areas will be better in the underexposed image.

You can combine two bracketed images using any image editor that can handle layers. Open both images and paste the brighter one as a separate layer on top of the darker one. Set the Opacity of the upper layer to 50 per cent. If you didn't use a tripod, you'll need to line up the images exactly with the Move Tool, rotating the upper image if necessary by dragging it by its edge.

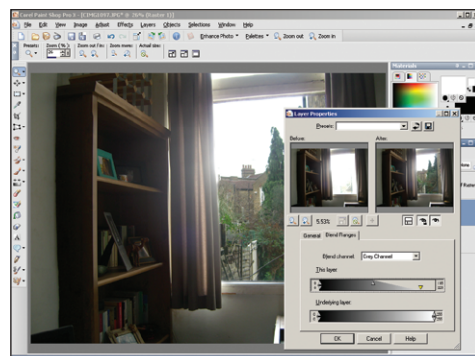
By simply mixing the two images together using 50 per cent opacity, we get an image that reveals more detail in both the shadows and highlight than either picture managed by itself. You may be perfectly happy with the results, but the downside is that the picture will look a bit pasty as you're essentially reducing the contrast to cope with the scene's high dynamic range. You might prefer to use the best areas of each photo rather than creating an average of the two.

In our example below this is fairly straightforward, as the simple shape of the window makes it easy to cut out and delete the overexposed version using the Lasso Tool to reveal the well-exposed exterior view from the bottom layer. Don't forget to return the opacity to 100 per cent. If the seam between the two images is too harsh, undo the delete, choose Feather Selection from the Select menu, feather by two pixels (or more if necessary) and click OK. The more complex the shape of the overexposed area, the more tedious it will be to cut around it, but you may be able to save time by using the Magic Selection Brush Tool.

Paint Shop Pro users have a much easier option. With the two images overlaid, double-click the upper layer in the Layers palette to open its Properties dialog box and click the Blend Ranges tab. Here, you can make the brightest parts of the bright image transparent by moving the sliders as in the screenshot below right. The two values to adjust are at the right of the upper greyscale ramp. Keeping some distance between these values makes brighter areas fade out gradually, giving subtler results. **BP**



▲ Mixing together under- and over-exposed shots of a high-contrast scene maintains detail in the shadows and highlight, but leads to a lack of contrast



▲ Paint Shop Pro's Blend Ranges feature makes it easy to isolate and combine the best elements from each photograph into one perfect one

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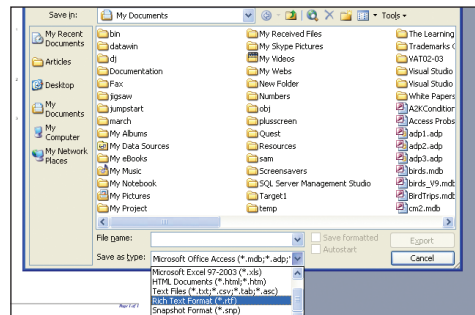
softwarehelp@computershopper.co.uk

Opening Access reports in Word

Q Can I transfer Access 2003 reports to Word 2003 and, if so, how? I know that you can do this using Access 2007, as it has a button in the toolbar for the purpose, but I've not seen anything similar in Access 2003. Is it possible?

Arthur McPhee

A The easiest way to do this is to export the report as a rich text format (RTF) file, then open that file in Word. Run the report and while viewing it choose File, Export. One of the report format choices you'll get is RTF. **KE**



▲ Export Access reports as RTF to read them in Word

Blocking email from unknown addresses

Q In *Software Help*, *Shopper* March 2007, you told Anne Trent how to set up Outlook so that only email from people in her contacts list appeared.

I want to do the same thing as Anne but I'm using Outlook Express through Tiscali broadband. Your instructions use the Junk E-mail option on the Tools menu, but Outlook Express doesn't have this. If Outlook Express can't do this, could you please recommend any other software that will do the job?

Alan Timmis

A As Outlook Express is a free alternative to Outlook, it's perhaps forgivable that Microsoft provides a cut-down set of features, and the junk email option is indeed missing.

Happily, you can still set it up so that you see only email from people in your address book. I urge you to think about the possible consequences first, though. For instance, what happens when a close friend changes their email address and sends a message to tell you?

Anyway, the solution lies in Outlook Express's message rules. Look under Tools, Message Rules, Mail and create a rule for messages 'Where the From line contains

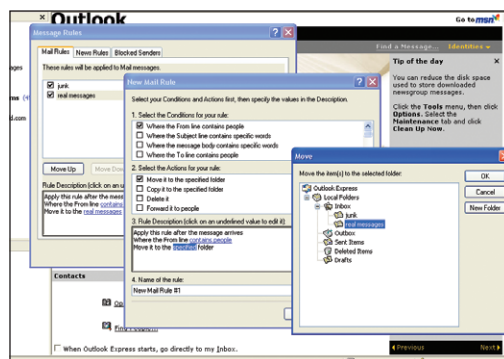
people'. If you select this option, you can specify the people to whom your rule should apply. Click on the highlighted text 'contains people' in the rule description, then add everyone from your address book. This may sound tedious but it simply involves selecting all the names in your address book and clicking a button. If the rule gets completely out of hand due to the sheer number of people in your address book, you can split it into as many rules as you like.

Next you must specify an action you want to take. I recommend that you move these messages to a specified folder. If you don't have an appropriate folder, you can create it while you create the rule. Just select the box for 'Move to specified folder', then click on the highlighted word 'specified' in the rule description. Click the Inbox in your folder list and, finally, click the New button to create a new folder within your Inbox. Call it 'Real messages'. Then select the 'Real messages' folder as the destination for your rule.

To finish, it's a good idea to rename your rule; otherwise it will be called something like 'New Mail Rule #1', and you'll have to look at it to see what it actually does. You rename the rule by changing its name in the box at the bottom of the dialog.

Now create a second rule. This one should be set to apply 'For all messages'. Make this rule move the messages to another folder, which we'll call Junk.

These two rules will sort your mail correctly provided they're in the right order. Outlook Express shows a list of your Message Rules and provides buttons that enable you to move a rule up or down in the list. Be careful, though, because the correct order isn't always obvious. In this case you must make sure that your junk rule comes at the top of the list. Your real messages rule comes second, taking any messages from your real contacts and moving them into the real messages folder. **KE**



▲ Create rules in Outlook Express to move messages to folders based on the name of the sender

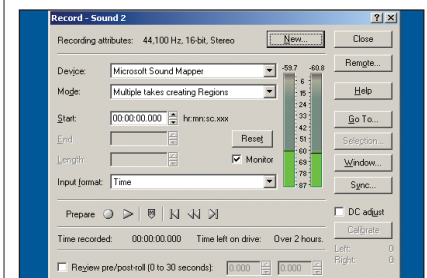
Is Sound Forge noisier?

Q I'm trying to record using my sound card's line input, but while the free Audacity software works as expected, Sony Sound Forge Studio is behaving strangely. Its input level meters are about a third of the way up when I'm recording silence. Why is this happening?

Guy Patey

A The level meters are showing background noise, but the fact that they're a third of the way up doesn't mean the noise is worse than it is with Audacity. Audio levels are measured in decibels (dB). This is a logarithmic measurement, where an increase in 6dB equates to a doubling of the volume (in terms of acoustic energy). Similarly, reducing the volume by 6dB halves the energy. Crucially, with logarithmic scales there's no absolute minimum. A value of 0dB isn't silence; in fact it typically represents full volume.

With no theoretical lower limit to the scale, software designers must decide how low its level meters will go. A 16-bit audio file has a theoretical dynamic range of 96dB, so Sound Forge Studio measures the input volume from 0dB (full volume) to -90dB. If the noise floor of your sound card is -60dB (a fairly typical value), this will measure a third of the way up the level meter. However, Audacity's level meters go from only 0dB to -60dB, so a -60dB noise floor will barely register. **BP**



▲ Input level meters show different amounts of background noise depending on their calibration

Sorting by surname

✉ In *Software Help*, *Shopper* March 2007, Grant Mangham describes a problem that involves sorting a parish register with names in the format:

Norman Stanley Fletcher
Frederick Bloggs
Charles Phillip Arthur George Windsor

He wanted to sort by surname, but by default Word sorts Charles (rather than Mr Bloggs) first in this list. A simple solution is to insert a tab between the Christian names and surnames and then convert the text into a table. Tables in Word can be sorted very easily. The only drawback would be if the data included dates. If you need to sort by date, you must enter it either as three

columns or in year/month/date format. Using Excel makes date-handling easier.

A Gapes

✉ I read your reply to Grant Mangham's letter and am flabbergasted at such an obtuse answer to so straightforward a question.

If Mr Mangham inputs his names into a table, then clicks Table, Sort, sorts by Column 2 and clicks OK, he will find that the table is put into the correct order by the second column. Mr Mangham can even use Table, Convert, Table to Text to convert the table back into text.

Mr Mangham can stop worrying about macros, VBA and the parts of Microsoft products most of us take great pains to avoid.

Simon Purton

A The use of tables in Word is a nice solution, and one I should have discussed in the original answer.

However, I didn't mention that Mr Mangham's problem was rather more complicated than simply sorting the names. He also wanted to do such things as handling abbreviated Christian names, so that Thos would be translated to Tho[ma]s, for example.

His various requirements made me decide that he needed a macro. However, if you are simply sorting text into order, Word's table sort facility works well.

Of course, as a database fan, I should point out that the entire project is a much better candidate for a database than a word processor, and the database solution could be expanded to any degree of complexity. **KE**

Colour-matching video footage

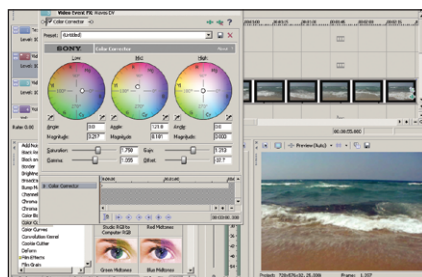
Q I filmed an interview outdoors on a cloudy day, but we had to re-shoot some bits and by that time the lighting had changed. Now that I've edited it together in Sony Vegas Movie Studio Platinum, these changes look quite odd. Is it possible to fix the problem in software by matching together the colours of different bits of footage?

Chris Barnes

A Software can't add three-dimensional light and shadows to video, but you may be able to adjust for overall differences in colour. The Color Corrector effect is particularly adept at subtle colour tweaks, thanks to its three colour wheels that add a tint to dark, medium and bright parts of video. To add warmth to footage, try applying a gentle orange tint with the Mid control and perhaps boost the saturation, too.

However, you'll need to use the effect sparingly to stop the results looking synthetic.

Colour controls in most other low-cost video-editing programs lack the precision for this kind of operation, but Adobe Premiere Elements has a Color Match effect that's designed for this. You can specify four sets of sample and target colours to map from one clip to another. **BP**



▲ Sony Vegas Movie Studio's Color Corrector can help you match the colours of different video clips

How do I insert carriage returns in strings?

Q What's the syntax for putting a carriage return in a string? I need to include a carriage return in one of my Access SQL queries.

James Howley

A Different programs and operating systems have slightly different ways of representing a carriage return. The two control characters used are character 13 in the ASCII character set, called 'carriage return' and written in Access as Chr(13), and character 10 in the ASCII character set, called 'line feed' and written in Access as Chr(10). According to where it's stored, the string:

Fred
Bloggs

Could be composed of:

"Fred" & Chr(13) & "Bloggs"

or

"Fred" & Chr(13) & Chr(10) & "Bloggs"

For example, when I pasted the address:

High Street
Anytown

from Microsoft Word into a customer's billing address, I needed the following query to find it:

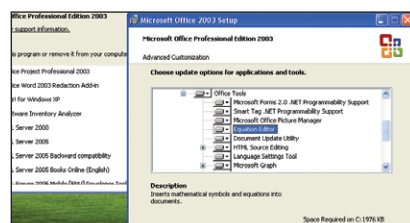
```
SELECT Customers.CustomerID,
Customers.CompanyName,
Customers.BillingAddress
FROM Customers
WHERE (((Customers.BillingAddress)="High
Street" & Chr(13) & Chr(10) & "Anytown"));
```

You can use the Chr function to insert any character you can't type into a SQL string. **KE**

Installing Equation Editor

Q I read *How To... Create equations in Office* (Shopper February 2007) with interest as I have been eagerly searching for the Equation Editor for a long time. Now that I have finally found it, I wish to install it for use in Word.

The article goes into a fair amount of detail on how to use Equation Editor, but doesn't say how install it. I use Office XP Professional, and Equation Editor has to be installed manually.



▲ Choose Office Tools, then set Equation Editor to run from your PC to add it to Word

I don't know if this is right, but I extracted Equation Editor's three components, and they are now sitting in a folder in My Documents. Can I install these files from this folder, or do I have to install them from the disc itself?

Alan Kelmsley

A To install Equation Editor in Word you use the 'Add/Remove Programs' option in the Control Panel. Choose Office XP Professional from the list of applications, and in the dialog box that appears, choose the option to 'Add or Remove Features'. On the next page, select the option for advanced customisation of applications. Move to the next page, and in the item 'Office Tools' at the very bottom of the available choices, make sure you've selected the option for Equation Editor to run on your computer. Click Update to make the changes, and Office will extract the appropriate files for you. You can delete the files you extracted in My Documents as Office won't use these. **KE**

I've lost my Outlook contacts

Q In a moment of foolishness I reinstalled Windows XP on my notebook. I've since managed to reinstate my Outlook 2000 email but I still can't access my contacts properly.

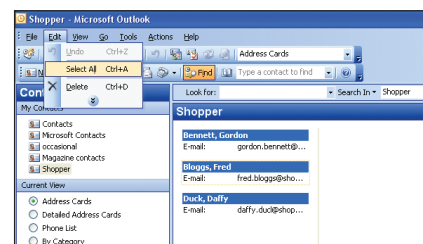
I can see them in the Folder List, but the only way to access one is to browse to it, right-click and choose Send message to contact. Typing their name into the To: field doesn't work, and neither does clicking the To... button. New addresses added since reinstallation work as expected, though.

The files I backed up and restored were outlook.pst and archive.pst from

C:\Documents and Settings\Andy\Local Settings\Application Data\Microsoft\Outlook. I also retrieved various files from C:\Documents and Settings\Andy\Application Data\Microsoft\Outlook in an attempt to fix this problem but to no avail, or indeed to any notable effect.

Tim Emerson

A Outlook has helpfully put your original contacts in a second contact folder. Fortunately, there is a reasonably simple solution. With the folder that contains all your old contacts visible, choose Edit, Select All,



▲ Select all your contact names in order to copy them in Outlook

Edit, Copy. Next, go to your new contacts folder and choose Edit, Paste. The contacts will copy across and you should be able to access them in all the usual ways. You can then remove the secondary contacts folder. **KE**

Highlighting invalid entries in Access

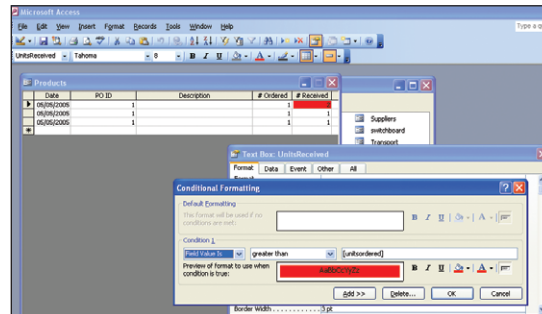
Q I'm working in Access 2003 and want to use colours to highlight when users enter an incorrect value. I've been trying to do this with code attached to the 'On Exit' Event of my subform. I would like to display a message about the problem, and make the offending text change colour.

However, my current code makes the field change colour on all the lines of the subform. How do I correct this? My code looks like this:

```
Private Sub UnitsReceived_
Exit(Cancel As Integer)
If Me.[UnitsReceived] >
Me.[UnitsOrdered] Then
Me.[UnitsReceived].ForeColor =
RGB(255, 0, 0)
Me.[UnitsReceived].SetFocus
Else
Me.[UnitsReceived].ForeColor =
RGB(0, 0, 0)
End If
End Sub
```

Mark Coverdale

A Subforms use the same control for every record in a form so, as you've seen, when one value causes a



▲ Use conditional formatting to highlight incorrect values

problem and you change the colour of the control, the colour of all the rows changes.

The solution is to use conditional formatting. Open the subform in Design view. Select the UnitsReceived control, then choose Conditional Formatting from the Format menu.

Enter a condition that says:

Field Value Is greater than
[UnitsOrdered]

You'll also need to specify that text turns red when this condition is met. Once you've done this you'll find that only the offending values appear in red.

You may also want to set up a table validation rule (as discussed in the answer to 'Tricky table validation', right) to ensure that even if the user ignores the formatting, they still can't save an incorrect entry. **KE**

Tricky table validation

Q I'm trying to create a table validation rule in Access 2000 to specify that the user must enter a value in the Venue field if and only if a value has been entered in the field Directorate.

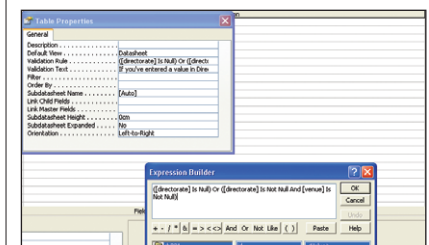
Is this possible? If not, can I perform the validation in the form? I've looked everywhere, but have not found a solution.

Glyn Foster

A The table validation rule you need is:

(([Directorate] Is Null) Or
([Directorate] Is Not Null
And [Venue] Is Not Null))

This says that the record is valid in two possible scenarios. First, it's valid whenever the Directorate field has nothing in it (Is Null). Alternatively, when the Directorate field is not Null, the Venue field mustn't be Null either. This covers both possibilities. **KE**



▲ Use a table validation rule for conditions that apply across fields in Access

Excel won't give me 101 per cent

Q I use Excel to store our team's sales figures and produce a chart at the end of the month showing each salesman's performance in percentage terms. The actual percentage is of great importance to my team, because we run an incentive scheme where the highest-grossing salesman can get a larger commission depending on how much more he sells than the next highest seller.

I nearly had a riot last month because Excel downgraded the top percentage by one point. What's going on?

Alan Matthews

A To see what Alan means, try the following set of figures. In column A, starting in row 1, enter:

5.4
4.1
1.9
3.7

In cell A6, enter the formula =Sum(A1:A4). Then in column B, starting in cell B1, enter the formulae:

=A1/A\$6

=A2/A\$6
=A3/A\$6
=A4/A\$6

This calculates each salesperson's result as a fraction of the total. You should see the values:

0.357616
0.271523
0.125828
0.245033

If you then put a Sum formula into cell B6, the result will be 1.

Now, if you set column B's format to be percentage, with zero decimal places, you'll see that the values appear as:

36%
27%
13%
25%

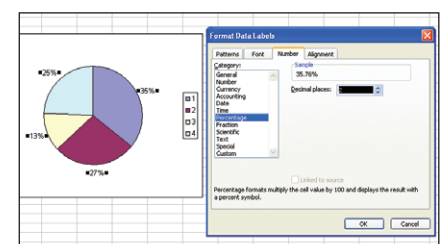
This is what you'd expect if you rounded each figure separately. If you now do a quick sum of those four values, though, they add up to 101, and you can't have 101 per cent of anything.

If you take the original values and use them as the base data for a pie chart, you'll see that

the top value is reduced from 36 percent to 35 per cent, hence the outcry in Alan's team.

The problem is that when the numbers are rounded individually, they add up to 101 per cent. In such cases, Excel removes a percentage point from the largest number to make sure the whole chart adds up to 100 per cent.

Fortunately, there is a way round the problem, although it's not particularly elegant. You need to select your chart and, in the Chart menu, click on Chart Options. In the Data Labels tab, click 'Show percent', and click OK to close the dialog. Then right-click on any of the data labels, and choose Format Data Labels. In the Number tab, set the Decimal places box to a value of 2. The percentages will then show as 35.76% (and so on). **KE**



▲ Set the data labels to show two decimal places for accurate values